

take these dreams away by orphan_account

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Alternate Universe, Alternate Universe - Soulmates, F/M

Language: English

Characters: Jonathan Byers, Nancy Wheeler

Relationships: Jonathan Byers/Nancy Wheeler

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2017-08-27

Updated: 2017-09-21

Packaged: 2022-04-02 01:41:33

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 2

Words: 3,402

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

This has to be a mistake. Something inside of him has gotten messed up. Maybe he can go to a doctor and explain this is all wrong, he isn't supposed to be seeing this yet, and he certainly isn't supposed to be seeing it because of Nancy Wheeler.

1. Chapter 1

Author's Note:

Backstreet's back alright?

Here's a Soulmate AU that wouldn't leave me alone. The world is black and white until you "recognize" your soulmate, and recognition doesn't always happen the moment you meet them. It happens to come at a rather inopportune time for Jonny Boy.

At first, Jonathan thinks it's just the flash.

He's got the camera up to his face, and the instant light can be a bit disorienting sometimes. He's used to it spotting his eyes and making him see fuzzy.

But he blinks away the light and the sudden color is still there, bright and vibrant and lighting up everything around him. The trampled carpet looks neon beneath his feet, even the sleeves of his shirt poking out underneath his jacket seem blinding.

"Did you get it?"

Nancy keeps holding her pose, one arm squeezing her brother and the other holding her sister to her hip. Mike's already beginning to fidget beside her.

But Jonathan can't feel his tongue anymore, and he's not sure how to answer. He's not sure he even took the picture.

"Jonathan?" Nancy asks again.

His finger slams down on the button hurriedly, and the second flash catches all of them off guard.

"Got it." He mumbles it down to his hands, pretending to fiddle with the settings of the camera. He doesn't want to look up and risk seeing

them like that again, seeing her like that.

That satisfies Mike, who slips away from his sisters and rushes back to his friends waiting along the steps. They begin to talk among themselves, voices carrying across the open hallway.

Jonathan can nearly hear his heart beating, the thrumming getting louder inside his head. He needs to leave. He needs to go home and sleep and when he wakes up everything will be the same as it always was. This can't happen now, not here, not with-

"Come on, Will." He loops an arm around his brother and steers him towards the door, forgetting to spare the Wheelers another word.

He drives home on the same road he's been down a hundred, thousand times. But it looks like something out of a fairytale. Everything is different now, everything seems closer and immersive and alive.

Will is talking about their game but Jonathan barely hears him. He can't stop looking out the windows, watching this new world move past.

He wants to name it so badly but he can't. What makes his hair a different color from his eyes? What makes the leather of the seats different from the dashboard?

What makes the pale of Nancy's skin different from his?

Shit. Nancy. He shouldn't even think about her. He has no right, he doesn't even *know* her-

Lights fill his car and a beeping horn shakes him from his thoughts. Jonathan moves back into the lane, shaking hands gripping the wheel.

Focus, Byers.

Will glances over at him, his face burrowed in a frown.

"Are you okay?" He asks, and Jonathan forces himself to nod.

Will looks as if he doesn't believe him.

"That was nice of you." He says, in the same voice he uses when he tries to placate their father. "To take some pictures for Mrs. Wheeler."

Jonathan wonders what would have happened if he hadn't done that. If he never went over there and took the photo, his life would be exactly the same as it was yesterday.

But it wasn't the photo, of course. Not really. It was Nancy. Nancy, and the way she smiled when she opened the door, how she asked after his mother, and how, he realized suddenly, she'd always been just *there*. Drifting on the perimeter of his life, making eye contact in the hallway or bumping into him on her home's front porch.

Will clears his throat.

"Jonathan?"

Right. He's trying to have a conversation.

"I don't feel well." He mutters. It's not an answer, but it quiets Will.

The rest of the drive passes in silence and a blur of things he doesn't have the words to describe.

His mother has a book, tucked away in the corner of her bookshelf. He flocks to it once Will is in his room, pulls it out and runs his fingers along the glossy pages the way he used to as a child, finally putting names to the hues surrounding him.

Brown is the color of Will's hair. *Auburn* is his mother's, and he finds he lands somewhere between *dark blonde* and *light brown*. His bedspread is *green* and the walls of their kitchen are *grey*. Mom's work uniform is *blue*, Will's favorite shirt is *red*, and their dog is *white*.

Everything feels the same as it always did. His bed is the same, his clothes are the same, his car is the same.

And yet everything has been irrevocably changed, and he knows he can't go back to the way things were.

Monday morning comes, and Jonathan awakes at 7:15 without any prompting from his mother.

He stares up at the ceiling (*cream*) and wonders if he can convincingly fake being sick.

Why now?

A part of him truly believe he'd never see it. Some people probably just weren't meant to. It didn't matter. He had Will and his mom, and photography, and he could live a perfectly happy life without a soulmate.

Besides, even if you *did* see it, that was no guarantee of anything. Look at Mom; she saw it ages ago and that didn't stop Dad from leaving.

And if he ever did see it, he's always assumed that would be years down the road. In college, or even after, once he gets the hell out of Hawkins and finds a place where he can really be himself. Then it would be okay to find a soulmate. Then all of this might make a little bit of sense

This has to be a mistake. Something inside of him has gotten messed up. Maybe he can go to a doctor and explain this is all wrong, he isn't supposed to be seeing this yet, and he certainly isn't supposed to be seeing it because of *Nancy Wheeler*.

He likes Nancy, he supposes. As much as he likes anyone outside of his family. She's always been polite, always been kind. She's not as obnoxious as the other kids at school. She's smart, too; all the teachers love her. And he's not blind, she's more than pretty. If things were different, if he could have time for anything other than family and work, if he could be any better at making friends or talking to people, maybe he would have tried to-

No. That didn't make this right.

His clock reads 7:30. The numbers (*red*) stare him down like a threat, forcing him to make a choice.

He wonders which is more cowardly; pretending to be sick to avoid school, or going to school because lying to his mother would make him feel too guilty.

As the bell rings for first period, and Nancy Wheeler steps into their English classroom, Jonathan wonders if the the best course of action may have been to just flee the state and change his name.

She doesn't look at him as she sits down, taking her spot beside her friend and talking about last night's assignment.

Jonathan stares down at the desk (*light yellow*) and tries to pretend his stomach doesn't feel nauseous.

Nothing has changed for her, he reminds himself. Nothing is different.

Last night, when he couldn't sleep because he didn't want to stop seeing the blues of his bedroom wall, he briefly wondered if she had seen it too. Was it supposed to happen at the same time for two people? Was that how you knew?

But he had discarded that notion almost as quickly as it came. Of course she hadn't. If Nancy saw it at all it was long before he did, when she was dating that baseball player or when she took classes at the college.

By all rules, there should be nothing that connects them together. And yet, when she's called up to the board to write an answer, Jonathan watches her draw white across the dull green board and follows the loops of her name in vivid color.

He spends lunch and free period in the darkroom, finishing the next full week of homework just so he won't chance running into her somewhere. He almost gets away with it; he's used to living in the outskirts, it's not hard to ramp it up a notch.

But somehow, just before 3:00 hits, someone comes walking up to his locker, clutching an *Advanced Biology* textbook and calling his name.

“Hey.” Nancy offers a smile, and Jonathan tries his best to mirror it without looking like a mental patient.

“Hi.” *God, what a great conversation starter.*

“I just wanted to say thanks, again.” Nancy holds her books tight to her chest, like she’s trying to hide something. “I’m sure my mom will love the photos.”

“Right. Sure. Of course.” He sounds like an idiot.

Nancy gives him another tight-lipped smile, and he finds himself wondering what shade of blue her eyes are.

“Have you developed them?” She asks politely.

“N-No. Not yet.”

She nods.

It’s almost like his mind has gone blank. He knows what the kids whisper about him, that he must be deaf or dumb because he doesn’t run his mouth constantly. He doesn’t always have something to say, but he’s always been perceptive. However, for the first time in his life, it seems as his brain has truly just given up on him.

Yet, somehow, his mouth seems to still be working. It betrays him and all his common sense, expelling some kind of secret hope in an instant.

“I’m going to do it now.” It comes out all in one breath, the words stringing together and slipping out of him before he has time to process them. “Do you want to come?”

Nancy looks as surprised by this offer as he is. She looks down at his camera bag, slung over his shoulder, and then back to his face, her eyebrows knitting close together.

“Now?”

“Yeah.” He sucks in another breath, attempting to cool the fire suddenly spreading through his body. “I- If you want.”

Nancy hugs her books closer, and he can’t read the expression on her face. She was just being nice because their brothers were friends, that didn’t mean she actually wanted to-

“Sure.” She tucks her hair (*dark brown, chestnut, beautiful*) behind her ear and nods.

2. Chapter 2

Notes for the Chapter:

Hey hey hey! I'm still alive and still head over heels for these goobers.

Jonathan is not entirely sure his brain is working. Because if it was, it would tell him, without a doubt, to turn around and abort mission and get himself as far away from Nancy as possible. This is a bad idea, one of his worst, and he's going to ruin this whole thing before it even starts.

He's gonna say something. He's going to slip up somehow, someday. He'll mention something about her nice her shirt (*yellow*) looks, or the hideous prom decorations (*olive green*).

He stays silent the whole trek to the darkroom, too afraid something too revealing will come out if he opens his mouth. Nancy seems fine with the silence, hugging her book to her chest and looking down at the stairs as they ascend. He wonders if she's ever come up here before, or if she's just following his lead.

He spends a good thirty seconds debating if he should open the door for her (*Would that be too forward? Or is that still casual? You hold the door for your friends, don't you? Come on, Byers, you don't even have any friends to test that theory*), but as they approach it swings open and a tall boy hurries out, clutching still dripping pictures and rushing down the hall.

Nancy grabs the door and waves her hand for him to head in, like it's no big deal to her at all.

Jonathan holds tightly to the canvas of his bag as he follows her invitation. He's pretty certain his heart is beating loud enough for people to hear on the floor below them.

The darkroom isn't the right name for it, he thinks as they enter. It's dark, of course, with painted walls (*black*) and no outside light. But it's also filled with a piercing red color that keeps distracting him

from what he's supposed to be doing. He tries his best to ignore Nancy wandering the room as he pulls out the roll of film, turns the knob until the image looks just the way he wants it to. It springs into focus before him, sharpening under his gaze to reveal three smiling faces.

Nancy comes around to join him as he sets it in the developer. She leans on the wooden table, her hair brushing the edges of his jacket (*tan*).

Jonathan finds himself underwhelmed by the photo itself. Now that he's seen the real thing, black and white doesn't do anything justice. It can't capture the multitudes, the weight of everything. It's a pale representation of the world he's just now realized exists.

"That looks great." Nancy reaches as if to grab the photo and he reacts on instinct, grabbing her wrist and pulling it away before she can touch the liquid.

She turns to look at him quizzically, and Jonathan finds himself struck by how blue her eyes are even in all the red of the darkroom.

"Jonathan?" She wiggles her fingers and he realizes he's still holding onto her, his chemical stained hands gripping her forearm.

He lets go and turns forcefully back towards the table, trying to ignore the sound of his own pulse thrumming in his ears.

"It doesn't stay. If you take it out too fast."

A silent beat passes between them.

"Oh." Nancy wipes her hand on her jeans.

"Sorry. About- that." He looks over and she's taken her same place at his side, returning her focus to the developing image. "I didn't mean to--"

Nancy only shrugs.

"It's okay." She taps her fingers against the table, her nails sky blue. "How long does it take?"

"About ten more minutes." Jonathan says as he looks down at the faces blurred by the liquid, shimmering under the red light. "Until it's all done."

Nancy pulls back on her sleeve to reveal a slim leather watch (*peach*), tightly bound around her wrist. She takes a look at the time and bits down on her lip, before looking back up at him.

"I've got to be back by 3:45 to watch Holly, my mom has book club tonight. I should probably walk home soon."

Her dark hair looks almost purple in the light, Jonathan thinks.

She blinks up at him, and he realizes she's waiting for his permission.

"Y-Yeah. That's fine." He stands up and shoves his hands in his pockets, trying to ignore the impulse in his head that wants to shout '*let me give you a ride, I have a car!*'

Nancy adjusts her book bag (*blue*).

"Can you give me the pictures tomorrow?" She asks.

"Sure. Yeah. Definitely." At this rate, he probably isn't even going to make it until tomorrow.

Nancy gives another quick smile and a nod, and bows out of the room.

Jonathan's left alone, drenched in red, staring down at the last piece of a colorless world that he'll never see again.

He almost gets away with it. The drive home goes smoothly, and making dinner for Mom and Will is the same as any other night. He doesn't need color to go through the same routine he's had for years.

There are even moments where he nearly forgets. He stands over the stove (*white*) and pours water into a pot (*black*) and thinks that nothing at all has changed.

And yet, with a single sentence, he slips up after dinner. He doesn't

mention something obvious, like Nancy, or the photos, or how the first thing he noticed when he came home was how the paint (*light brown*) on the top half of their front door doesn't quite match the bottom half (*dark brown*).

No, it's something irrelevant and foolish. He's helping Mom clean up after Will's hurried back to his room, and he makes an accidental comment about the design (*orange*) on the outside of the glass. He doesn't think anything of it until his mom stops moving, slowly sets her plate back on the table, and envelops him in a hug.

"Oh, Jonathan." She whispers, and he feels frozen in place.

She sits him down on the couch, dirty dishes be damned, and speaks in a soft, careful voice that reminds him frightfully of when she attempted to give him The Talk after his sixteenth birthday.

"You know," She begins, brushing imaginary dirt off her slacks. "I saw it when I was around your age."

He's really not sure what he's supposed to say here, so he stays silent.

"It's perfectly normal!" Oh god, this is another version of the sex talk. "I know it probably seems really weird right now, but—"

"Mom, I'm—" *Trying very hard not to think about it because none of this makes a goddamn bit of sense.* "Fine."

Joyce scoots closer on the couch, laying her hand on his arm.

"I know, sweetie. But I'm sure it just feels... Different."

He forces a nod.

"And, well... who is it?" Joyce is a lot of wonderful things, but subtle is rarely one of them.

You don't know them would be a waste of time, because everyone in this town knows everyone else. And as busy as his mom is, she still knows how he spends most of his time, and it isn't hanging around girls. If anyone is more surprised about this development than he is, it's probably her.

"Doesn't matter." He stands up in an attempt to flee the increasingly awkward situation, but she reaches out and grabs his hands.

"Jonathan, of course it does!"

"It's a mistake." He hates that he can see the redness in her cheeks. "I don't think this was supposed to happen."

She squeezes his hands in her own, her expression somehow covering "I love you" and "don't be stupid" at the same time.

"If," Joyce clears her throat, pushing the sentiment out despite her maternal instincts. "If you don't want to talk about it, we don't have to."

Good, because he really, *really* doesn't want to talk about it. Now or, potentially, ever

"Just know that I'm here. Whenever you're ready."

Jonathan feels a warmth spreading inside of his chest as she kisses his forehead. Briefly, he wonders if there's a matching redness coloring his face.

"Thanks." He mumbles, and she squeezes his palm again.

Her eyes are a warm, friendly brown as she smiles at him. In that instant, it's the best color he's ever seen.

It's... *Real*.

That's the decision he's come to as he lays in bed, twenty-four hours removed from a life-shattering discovery and feeling like he's lived a hundred years since he was last here. His world has changed and he's unsuccessfully kept it a secret. He's had maybe his third ever real conversation with Nancy. And it went-

Well. It went.

Since this is, horrifically, actually happening, he might as well try and cope with it. He should talk to her. *Right?* That's how you meet

people. That's how you become friends.

Not that he is any sort of authority on the subject.

Maybe he should talk to Will about it. Will was always great at making friends. He came home from his very first day of elementary school with Mike and Lucas, while Jonathan's made it through 11 grades and still struggles to find people to let him look at their notes when he misses a class.

Will is going to know what to do. He'll know how to talk to Nancy without sounding like a total idiot. He'll know how to actually get to know her, instead of just acknowledging her the way he does most others outside his family.

She probably won't see it. Not with him, anyway. But knowing her, maybe even being her friend... That could help.

It would at least make him feel like less of a total creep for having a girl he doesn't even know as his soulmate.

Those thoughts manage to actually reassure him. If there's no reversing this (and he scoured Mom's book of colors for a good twenty minutes looking for anything on that exact subject) then there's no point in fighting it.

That night, Jonathan closes his eyes and dreams in color for the first time.

Notes for the Chapter:

All my knowledge of developing photos comes from my memories of taking photography in 10th grade so... If this is wildly incorrect I apologize.

Author's Note:

WIP, hopefully I'll update regularly but.... y'all know me.